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Oakland Museum of California



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SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF RICHARD MISRACH'S PHOTOGRAPHS HELP MARK 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF 1991 OAKLAND-BERKELEY HILLS FIRE

**Photography Exhibition at the Oakland Museum of
California Inspires Reflection on the 1991 Catastrophic Fire**

*Richard Misrach Photographs of Fire Aftermath Serve as a
Provocative Means of Collective Memory*

This release is available online at: www.museumca.org/press-landing

(OAKLAND, CA) June 28, 2011—In October 1991, immediately following the catastrophic firestorm which struck the Oakland and Berkeley Hills, renowned San Francisco Bay Area photographer and long-time Berkeley resident **Richard Misrach** (American, b. 1949) ventured into the fire zone armed with his 8x10-inch view camera. Working alone, he roamed the devastated area, recording both stark vistas and intimate details of destroyed homes. This October to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the tragic fire, the **Oakland Museum of California** presents **1991: Oakland-Berkeley Fire Aftermath, Photographs by Richard Misrach**, on view **October 15, 2011, through February 12, 2012**, in the Museum's Great Hall.

Featuring compelling iconic images printed by the artist himself—including one (8x10 foot), 13 (65x70 inches), and 26 (11x14 inches) photographs—the exhibition bears witness to the profound loss borne by countless individuals and the community they called home. Out of respect for the victims of the fire—which killed 25 people, injured 150 others, and destroyed 1,520 acres—Misrach's images have remained unexhibited for the last 20 years. This exhibition, as well as a similar presentation on view at the Berkeley Museum of Art and Pacific Film Archive provides a poignant document to this tragic event in the Bay Area's history.

"Richard Misrach is one of the most important artists working today, and for a long time these photographs were a hidden part of his expansive body of work," says OMCA's **Curator of Photography Drew Johnson**. "Presenting this exhibition is testament to

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OMCA's dedication to telling the many stories of California—and to the people and the events that shape our collective heritage.”

In addition to the photographs on view, visitors to *1991: Oakland-Berkley Fire Aftermath, Photographs by Richard Misrach* can record their collective history surrounding this event by contributing recollections and reflections in an over-sized handmade elegy book made by the artist. Featured as part of the exhibition and intended as a work of art in and of itself, the elegy book provides an interactive component in the gallery and will go on to exist in OMCA's permanent collection. In addition, a digital story booth intended to record oral histories of those affected by the fire will be featured in OMCA's Gallery of California History.

1991: Oakland-Berkley Fire Aftermath, Photographs by Richard Misrach is organized by Curator of Photography Drew Johnson. The exhibition is accompanied by *1991*, a limited-edition book published by Blind Spot Editions, available in the OMCA Store and on the publisher's website.

GIFT ANNOUNCEMENT

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1991 fire, Richard Misrach has donated Fire Aftermath photographs to the prominent cultural institutions of the affected East Bay. Both the Oakland Museum of California and the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive announce the gift of 32 photographic prints by the artist to their respective institutions.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Richard Misrach launched his career in the early 1970s when he documented street life on Telegraph Avenue. Starting in the late-1970s, he turned to the creation of cultural landscapes with an 8x10 view camera—forgoing black-and-whites that helped to pioneer large-scale photography with a sociopolitical edge. His work ranges widely and has taken him around the world, from the petroleum industry's toxic wastelands along the Mississippi River and the detritus of Katrina to the beaches of Hawaii and the pyramids of Egypt.

Misrach's photographs have been exhibited worldwide and are held in the collections of more than 50 major institutions, here and abroad, including the Oakland Museum of California; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. He is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including the German Society for Photography's Cultural Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2002 and the Lucie Award for Achievement in Fine Art Photography in 2008. Misrach is represented by the Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York, and Marc Selwyn Fine Arts, Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

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The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) brings together collections of art, history and natural science under one roof to tell the extraordinary stories of California and its people. OMCA's groundbreaking exhibits tell the many stories that comprise California with many voices, often drawing on first-person accounts by people who have shaped California's cultural heritage. Visitors are invited to actively participate in the Museum as they learn about the natural, artistic and social forces that affect the state and investigate their own role in both its history and its future. With more than 1.8 million objects, OMCA is a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and environmental heritage.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Museum admission is \$12 general; \$9 seniors and students with valid ID, \$6 youth ages 9 to 17, and free for Members and children 8 and under. OMCA offers onsite underground parking and is conveniently located one block from the Lake Merritt BART station, on the corner of 10th Street and Oak Street. The accessibility ramp is located at the new 1000 Oak Street main entrance.

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